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ABSTRACT

In setting out to design a system of cataloging, or to evaluate a given system, or to apply a system in effect, it is necessary to begin with a clarification of the ends which the product of cataloging - that is, the catalog - is to serve in the library. To contribute to an understanding of these ends, the present study considers the role of the catalog in relation to the library's operations and services, the function of the catalog as it has evolved over the past century, and the specific objectives which the catalog has come to serve in view of its role and function in the library. (Author)

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2 THE AUTHOR AND TITLE CATALOG IN THE LIBRARY

ITS ROLE, FUNCTION, AND OBJECTIVES²

1 Seymour Lubetzky

Report 2 of a series on
The Principles of Cataloging

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ABSTRACT

In setting out to design a system of cataloging, or to evaluate a given system, or to apply a system in effect, it is necessary to begin with a clarification of the ends which the product of cataloging - i.e., the catalog - is to serve in the library. To contribute to an understanding of these ends, the present study considers the role of the catalog in relation to the library's operations and services, the function of the catalog as it has evolved over the past century, and the specific objectives which the catalog has come to serve in view of its role and function in the library.

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THE AUTHOR AND TITLE CATALOG IN THE LIBRARY

The instruments of descriptive - or bibliographic - cataloging are generally found in the form of "Rules" or "Instructions" prescribing how the materials of a library should be "entered" and "described" so as to form a well-integrated and efficient catalog. These rules are necessary and important for three reasons: (1) to expedite the work of cataloging - by providing for the cataloger ready directions to follow; (2) to insure uniformity and consistency in the treatment of library materials - without which the catalog would tend to become increasingly chaotic and confusing; and (3) to facilitate bibliographic cooperation among libraries - and thus serve the cause of bibliographic and cataloging economy. But the very importance of these rules and of their observance tends to divert attention from the ends which they must be designed to serve and in light of which they must be interpreted, evaluated, and changed as may be required. To realize what these ends are to be, it is necessary to consider the role of the catalog in the library's operations and services, the general function of the catalog in context of the library's functions, and the specific objectives which the catalog is to serve in view of its role and function in the library.

The Role of the Catalog in the Library. The library has inspired many eloquent metaphors exalting its mission and importance. It has been described as the custodian of "the diary of the human race," "the shrine of man's intellect and wisdom," "the true university of these days," "a sanatorium of the mind," and more recently, in a contemporary idiom, as "the brain bank of the nation." The tributes have come from men in all walks of life, including the late President Kennedy who regarded the library as "the key to progress and the advancement of knowledge."¹ It is no doubt all of this. It has come to serve people of all ages and levels of education - as children's libraries,

school libraries, college and university libraries; of various interests - as art libraries, law libraries, medical libraries, music libraries, technological libraries; of various areas - as local public libraries, county libraries, state libraries, regional libraries, national libraries; and of any combination of interests - as county law libraries, national agricultural and medical libraries. These libraries may differ also in other respects, including the kinds of services offered by them; but they all have in common the three basic functions of a library: the selection and acquisition of the materials required by their users, the preparation of catalogs of the materials acquired, and the provision of assistance in their use.

The first of these functions, which is fundamental to the essence of a library, involves (a) examination of announcements and of records of publications - including publishers', dealers' and other catalogs and bibliographies - and of the requests and suggestions of users, for desirable or needed materials; (b) searching of the library's catalog to determine whether or not the materials selected, or any other editions or translations of the works, are already in the library; and (c) ordering the materials selected which are not in the library in accordance with governing policies. Thus the first function of the library - the development of its collections - depends on its catalog, and the effectiveness of the catalog will affect that of the process of acquisition. An ineffective or unreliable catalog will take more time to search and may lead to costly duplication in purchasing and processing of materials already in the library.

If the first function is fundamental, the second - i.e., cataloging - is central to all the operations and services of the library. The role of the catalog in the process of acquisition has just been noted. The process of cataloging itself depends no less on the condition of the catalog into which the results of the cataloging process are to be incorporated. For the catalog

is not, or should not be, merely an aggregation of freely produced entries of individual books and other items, as is sometimes assumed even by people who might be expected to know better, but a systematically designed instrument in which all entries, as component parts, must be properly integrated. Thus the catalog, embodying previous cataloging decisions, is at once both the result as well as an important tool of cataloging, and an effective catalog is as essential to the process of cataloging as it is to the process of acquisition.

The third function of the library - the provision of assistance in its use - depends more obviously than the other two functions on the effectiveness of the catalog. The assistance required normally involves the location of certain books, authors, or sources of information. These questions are similar in character to those arising in the processes of acquisition and cataloging, and the answers sought will similarly be affected by the condition of the catalog. The more effective the catalog - the more intelligible and responsive it is - the more frequently and readily will it yield the desired answers, either directly to the library's users or to the staff assisting them, thus saving doubly the time of the library's staff and users.

The critical importance of the catalog for those who administer as well as those who use the library has led Thomas Carlyle, as a library user, to testify that "A library is not worth anything without a catalogue - it is a Polyphemus without any eye in his head - and you must front the difficulties, whatever they may be, of making proper catalogues;"² and Ralph R. Shaw, as a librarian, to characterize the catalog as "that backbone of the library."³ In view of this role of the catalog, one is well advised to be wary of certain "economies" or "short cuts" in its construction which are calculated to impair its effectiveness and thereby also the effectiveness of all the operations and services depending on it. Such economies may not only be offset by increased costs in the other operations and services of the library, but may also be

detrimental to its whole purpose. This is particularly to be borne in mind in the case of cooperative or centralized cataloging, where an injudicious economy may impair at once the operations and services of many libraries.

The General Function of the Catalog. In approaching the problem of cataloging and the requirements which the catalog is to meet to be effectively helpful to its users, it is necessary to begin with a deliberate consideration of what is to be the general and basic function of the catalog, for the absence of a clarification of, and an agreement on, this function has historically led to controversies and disagreements on the specific objectives and methods of cataloging. This is interestingly illustrated in the experience of Sir Thomas Bodley who set out, at the turn of the seventeenth century, on a book buying expedition for the library which was to immortalize his name, with the aid of the catalog prepared by the then librarian of the University of Oxford, Thomas James. Like other catalogs of that day, James's catalog was intended primarily as an inventory list of the books on the shelves. For this purpose, his entries in the catalog were very informal and very brief, and books bound with other books were merely noted in the entry of the first book but had no separate entries in the catalog. This was apparently sufficient for James's purposes, but was understandably frustrating for Bodley who had to know, when considering books for purchase, whether or not those books were already in the library. He wrote James complaining and explaining that his failure to provide separate entries for books bound with other books will lead one to buy unnecessarily duplicate copies, and that his brief entries are insufficient to tell one what particular editions the library had.⁴ But Bodley's criticism of James's cataloging methods was really predicated on a different view of the basic function of the catalog. Whereas James conceived of it as a list for use in taking inventory of the books on the shelves, Bodley wanted it as a record for use in determining whether the library had a particular book or edition.

A quarter of a millennium later--in 1847-1849--when, by an unusual coincidence of men and events, cataloging became a national issue and no less than a Royal Commission was appointed to hold public hearings on the cataloging rules adopted by Antonio Panizzi for the library of the British Museum,⁵ the contest between what might be called the conservatives and the progressives in cataloging of that time again revolved largely around particular cataloging questions--such as whether a nobleman should be entered in the catalog under his family name or his title, the entry of anonymous publications, the treatment of periodical publications, and so on--but inevitably involved also the basic issue of the general function of the catalog. The conservative critics of the new rules maintained that all that was needed was a simple "finding-catalogue"--the meaning of which was reflected in Carlyle's assertion: "The grand use of any catalogue is, to tell you, in any intelligible way, that such and such books are in the library. ... I should expect it to be a simple thing enough to draw up a simple list of the names of the books..."⁶ However, the progressive defenders of the new rules, and particularly Panizzi himself, were able to demonstrate spectacularly the simplism of their eminent critics' notions of the problem of cataloging--or, in Panizzi's words, "that the delusions which exist in the public mind with regard to the ease with which a complete catalogue may be made are wild and ludicrous,"--and the need of "a full and accurate catalogue."⁷ But the essential difference between the "finding-catalogue" and the "full and accurate catalogue" remained vague and elusive. It was not easy to conceive of a "finding-catalogue" which was not "full and accurate," or of "a full and accurate catalogue" which was not also a "finding-catalogue." And a decade later Edward Edwards, reflecting on this discussion, commented: "But if there is to be any hope of general agreement as to what sort of catalogues may reasonably be termed 'proper,' we must try to set out with some clear and definite conceptions of the purposes which such catalogues are intended

to subserve . . . Any one whose curiosity may induce him to 'read up' the discussion, will meet very frequently with a new phrase--that of 'finding-catalogue'--which, at the first blush, looks like a definition, but on closer scrutiny will probably be found of small help in the inquiry. In some sense, indeed, all catalogues must be 'finding' catalogues, or they are worthless, but the character of the catalogue which, (in that sense), merits the name will depend on the subject of the search."⁸

The wisdom of Edwards's advice struck a sympathetic chord in the mind of a young and eager cataloging apprentice, Charles A. Cutter, who was destined to dominate Anglo-American cataloging thought in the last quarter of that century, and whose influence continued strongly in the half century that followed. Reviewing later the cataloging works of his day, Cutter noted critically that they had not "attempted to set forth the rules in a systematic way or to investigate what might be called the first principles of cataloging,"⁹ and his own rules began, as Edwards counseled, with a definition of the purposes which the catalog was to serve. The purposes, or "Objects," formulated by Cutter were:

"1. To enable a person to find a book of which either

- | | | |
|-----------------|---|-----------|
| (A) the author | } | is known. |
| (B) the title | | |
| (C) the subject | | |

2. To show what the library has

- (D) by a given author
- (E) on a given subject
- (F) in a given kind of literature.

3. To assist in the choice of a book

- (G) as to its edition (bibliographically)
- (H) as to its character (literary or topical)."¹⁰

Cutter held steadfast to these "Objects," repeating them at the beginning of

each of the three subsequent editions of his Rules, with a somewhat caustic footnote: "This statement of Objects . . . has been criticized; but as it has also been frequently quoted, usually without change or credit, in the prefaces of catalogues and elsewhere, I suppose it has on the whole been approved." However, the Anglo-American Catalog Rules of 1908, which succeeded and were based on Cutter's Rules, omitted the "Objects," and they have never since been reinstated.

The issue of what was to be the general function of the catalog in the library had, however, not been quite disposed of and was to emerge again. This occurred in the early 1930's when the 1908 Rules became ripe for revision and American libraries, in the throes of general economic stress, were driven to search for further economies in their operations and services. Cataloging, being the least understood and most criticized (not altogether without reason) library operation, naturally became a ready target of economy, and the ensuing argument, involving again the issue of the basic function of the catalog, echoed that of nearly a hundred years earlier, with "finding list" and "reference tool" slogans used in lieu of the earlier "finding-catalogue" and "full and accurate catalogue." The advocates of economy in cataloging argued, like their predecessors, that the function of the catalog was to be merely that of a brief and simple "finding list"--to help one find a book in the library--and that everything that was not necessary for that purpose should be expunged from cataloging. The sentiment for stringent economy was expressed in a demand that: "Practices with no stronger claim to continuance than that of tradition should be brushed aside. Academic precision that serves no better purpose than rendering homage to the god of completeness should be laid away."¹¹ On the other hand, the opponents of retrenchment in cataloging argued that "There is nothing on the catalog card that is not used by someone at some time,"¹² that "The catalog is the most important reference tool in the library," and that

economies in cataloging will only entail increased reference costs and reduced services which together will more than offset the savings sought. To illustrate the reference use of the catalog, the Reference Librarian of the Columbia University Libraries related how she had once observed a reader "almost wearing a path from his seat in the reference room to the card catalog." Upon investigation, she found that he was using the catalog to locate, not books, but the dates of authors, which he needed to know in connection with an examination for which he was studying. Even more interesting was her story about a telephone call she once received requesting her to check the catalog to find whether Columbia had a certain book in an edition less than 15 centimeters in height. The caller, it turned out, was a literary editor engaged in reading the manuscript of a novel submitted for publication. At one point in the novel, the hero, who was represented as reading a well-known work, was interrupted and hastily put the book in his pocket. The editor was curious to know whether the author of the manuscript was careful about his facts and wanted to verify whether that work was published in a pocket-size edition. Again, the caller did not want the book itself, he only wanted the information about the book, and the Reference Librarian was able to supply him the needed information instantly thanks to the completeness of the catalog.¹³ Another Reference Librarian, of the University of Chicago Libraries, went further in asserting without qualification that "The card catalog is one of the richest and fullest reference tools that the reader can use," indeed, the "key to all knowledge," and went on to praise the catalogers' painstaking in supplying obscure bits of information: "In some mysterious way the members of the catalog departments of our great libraries are splendid sleuths and can unearth and put on catalog cards for the use of future generations such personal items as middle names, former and present husbands' names, or degrees of royal rank. Even though the person concerned hoped to keep the date of his birth from being broadcast to the world, these cataloging experts can usually

find it . . . and will put it on the catalog cards for posterity to see."¹⁴ And to demonstrate the potential value of such data, she proceeded to compile a biographical sketch of R. R. Bowker, based solely on the catalog entries under his name and showing "some of his interests, some of the organizations to which he belonged, and some of his friends."¹⁵ Commenting on this debate, one thoughtful librarian observed: "Rather curiously . . . as a profession, we seem never yet to have agreed upon a fundamental cataloging policy . . . As librarians we are in profound disagreement as to what a library catalog should be and as to what it should do. On the one side are . . . [those] who look upon it as an end in itself, a reference tool which might conceivably be of very great use even if no library existed behind it at all. And, on the other side, are . . . [those] who say that the catalog is not to be developed as of itself but only as a means to an end, that end being solely to put the reader, easily and quickly, in touch with the book that he seeks."¹⁶ And in support of the latter view he quoted sympathetically Professor Branscomb's judgment that "Catalogs were created to inform readers what books the library possesses and where they are; their basic purpose in other words, is to serve as finding lists"¹⁷ - a clear echo of Carlyle's testimony which Panizzi had so brilliantly and convincingly exposed as deficient nearly a hundred years earlier.

The concepts of the catalog as a "finding list" and "reference tool" proved little more constructive than those of the earlier "finding-catalogue" and "full and accurate catalogue," and for similar reasons. The "finding list" notion appeared attractive because it lent the catalog a definite focus - the books in the library - but the focus was recognized as too narrowly limited to "books" as concrete objects and ignoring the relationships of the works embodied in them which, in the last analysis, is the focus of the user's interest. On the other hand, the "reference tool" notion suggested for the catalog an unlimited focus -

including everything that might be "used by someone at some time" - an extravagant notion that could not be seriously entertained even if cataloging were immune from considerations of economy. Obviously, the catalog was significantly more than a "finding list" and considerably less than a general "reference tool," but the proper definition of its function was yet to come. It came, as the cataloging profession was perplexed and buffeted about between the adherents of the "finding list" and the "reference tool" catalogs, in a discourse presented to it by one who spoke from many years of reflection on bibliography, librarianship, and scholarship. Viewing cataloging, as it must be viewed to be fully understood, in the context of the "Bibliographical Function of the Library," Pierce Butler explained: "Bibliography is the systematic process by which civilized man finds his way about in the world of books that he has created. A catalog is a bibliography of the books in a particular collection."¹⁸ The essence of Butler's message was that the function of the library is not only to acquire for its users the materials they need, but also to provide the "bibliographical" guidance they require to help them make optimum use of these materials - which, after all, is the ultimate purpose of the library; and in furtherance of this purpose, the catalog must be designed to function, not as "a simple list of the names of books" showing "that such and such books are in the library" - as Carlyle had suggested and many others have since innocently assumed - but as a helpful guide to the library's resources. As such, the catalog need not include all kinds of information about an author or a book cataloged that might be "used by someone at some time," as the "reference tool" advocates implied, but only that which is relevant to and helpful in one's use of the library's resources; on the other hand, it must not be limited to telling one only "what books the library possesses," as the "finding list" advocates contended, but go beyond that and call his attention to related materials in the library which might be pertinent to his interest and thus help him to utilize more fully and adequately the library's resources.

The Objectives of the Catalog. The concept of the catalog as a guide designed to tell an inquirer not only whether the library has the particular book he wants, but also what related materials it has that might well serve his purpose, implies that the materials of a library have significant aspects by which they can be related to enhance their effective use. What, then, are these aspects?

Contemplating the most typical of library materials - the book - and its use, one is led to recognize two distinct and important aspects. One is the origin and identity of the book as a phenomenon, entity, or product; and the other is the character of its contents as on a particular subject or of a particular type. The former is referred to as the "bibliographical" aspect of the book, and the latter as its "subject" aspect - though the terminology leaves much to be desired. It will also be observed that those who come to consult the catalog are normally either after particular books, of particular authors or titles, or after books on a particular subject or of a particular type - that is, the users of the catalog exhibit either a "bibliographical" or a "subject" interest in the materials sought by them.

The problem involved in providing for the subject needs of the catalog users is the province of "subject cataloging" and "classification," which are beyond the scope of this study. The provision for the users' bibliographical needs requires a prior consideration of the genetics of library materials - as exemplified by the book.

The book, it should be noted, comes into being as a dichotomic product - as a material object or medium used to convey the intellectual work of an author. Because the material book embodies and represents the intellectual work, the two have come to be confused, and the terms are synonymously used not only by the layman but also by the cataloger himself. Thus catalogers refer to the author and title of a book instead of, more accurately, to the author of the work and

the title of the book embodying it, and the inquirer searching the catalog for a particular book is more often than not after the work embodied in it, although he is very likely unaware of the distinction between the two. But the distinction between the book and the work is not purely an academic one. It is, rather, of basic importance to an understanding of the nature of the problem of cataloging and of the objectives which the catalog should be designed to serve. This is due to the fact that the existence and the vicissitudes of the work are not confined to any particular book; that the book is actually only one particular edition, or representation of the work embodied in it - which may be found in the library in various editions of special interest (as first, latest, well edited, illustrated), in various translations, in various media (as books, tapes, discs), and sometimes, in addition, under different titles or different names of the author. The question that must then be faced at the outset - and that has been faced since Panizzi, though beclouded by the failure to distinguish clearly and consistently between the book and the work - is whether the objective of the catalog should be merely to tell an inquirer whether or not the library has the particular book he is looking for, or whether it should go beyond that and tell him also what other editions and translations - or other representations - of the work the library has so as to help him more effectively to determine whether the library has what he needs and to select what might best serve his purposes. The answer to this question is necessarily to be found in the library's general function. If, as Butler maintained and as has been increasingly recognized, the function of the library is to provide for its users not only the materials needed by them but also the "bibliographical" guidance they require to help them make optimum use of the materials, then the catalog will have to be made to tell an inquirer in search of a book not only whether the library has that book but also what other editions and translation of the work the library has.

The interrelation between the various representations of a work - as

editions or translations - is an immediate and intimate one; but there is yet another "bibliographical" relation of both direct and indirect interest to many catalog users: it is the interrelation between the works of an author. To show what works the library has of a particular author is of direct interest to many users concerned, not with any particular book or work, but rather with a particular author who may be represented by his works in the library. Indirectly, this is of interest to many more users who are uncertain, or may have an inaccurate citation, of the title of the book or the work they want, but could recognize it in a list of the author's works. In fact, only such a list makes it possible for one to determine with certainty whether or not the library has a particular work of a certain author. It is probably in recognition of these facts that the major codes of cataloging rules since Panizzi have generally provided for the catalog to show what works, or "books," the library had of a particular author, although the means they employed to accomplish it have not been the same.

In summary, then, it must be recognized that, genetically, a book is not an independent entity but represents a particular edition of a particular work by a particular author; and that, consequently, it may be of interest to different users either as a particular edition, or as a representation of a particular work, or as a representation of the work of a particular author. If all these users are to be served - and it is further realized that even those who look for a particular book would generally better be served if informed at the same time of the other editions of the work and of the other works of the author which the library has - then the book will have to be represented in the catalog as an edition of a particular work by a particular author and related to the other editions (and translations) of that work and to the other works of that author. This is the essence of the objectives evolved in the preparation of the new Anglo-American Cataloging Rules and subsequently adopted by the International

Conference on Cataloging Principles. In the "unfinished draft" of the former they read:

"The objectives which the catalog is to serve are two:

First, to facilitate the location of a particular publication, i.e., of a particular edition, of a work, which is in the library.

Second, to relate and display together the editions which a library has of a given work and the works which it has of a given author."¹⁹

In the Report of the latter they are reworded to read:

"The catalogue should be an efficient instrument for ascertaining

1. whether the library contains a particular book . . . and
2. which works by a particular author and which editions of a particular work are in the library."²⁰

Comparing these objectives with the corresponding "Objects" of Cutter cited above, it will be noted that the first objective "to facilitate the location of a particular book" is substantially identical with Cutter's "To enable a person to find a book." The use of the phrase "to facilitate" for Cutter's "To enable" was intended to emphasize the choice of cataloging methods which not only enable but facilitate the location of the material sought. The emphasis was directed at such former rules as those which prescribed the entry of an author under his full and real name instead of the name by which he is commonly identified in his works as provided in the new rules. The former enabled a person to find the author desired in the catalog, but often by means of references to the full and real name; the latter is intended to facilitate the location of the author by using the name under which he is most likely to be looked for. The second objective, however, is significantly different in specifying the editions of a work and the works of an author for Cutter's vague what the library has by a given

author. Cutter's unqualified what is expressive of the failure to distinguish clearly and consistently between the book and the work in his rules, and characterizes also the old Anglo-American rules which were based on them; and the differences noted between Cutter's "Objects" and the objectives evolved in the preparation of the new Anglo-American Cataloging Rules reflect some of the fundamental differences between the old and the new Anglo-American Cataloging Rules.

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